

LET'S GET STARTED

We celebrate the underrated slow cooker in this section! If you are a time-pressed cook, your slow cooker can be an incredibly valuable asset in the kitchen. After all, there is nothing like coming home from work to a warm, luscious dinner already prepared! Be open to the many unique things you never thought a slow cooker could produce such as baked potatoes, egg frittatas, oatmeals, stuffed peppers, curries, bean dishes, soups and more! Pass on the rich recipes from decades ago which were often loaded with processed foods such as cheeses, canned soups, and fatty meats. Instead, opt for lighter recipes like the ones here and discover the new, healthier trends in crock pot cookery!

Crock Pot Helpful Hints

1

MAKE CLEAN UP A SNAP. Many crock pots have removable stoneware inserts, which are dishwasher, oven, and microwave safe. Plastic crock pot liners that resemble cooking bags make for even speedier clean up.

2

PREP VEGETABLES, MEAT AND SAUCE THE NIGHT BEFORE. Remember to place prepared ingredients in the refrigerator. In the morning, just add all ingredients to the slow cooker and go! If you have a little extra time, brown the meat and/or vegetables in a skillet before adding it to the crock pot to bring out the flavors before slow cooking.

3

DON'T OPEN THE SLOW COOKER! Except to check doneness in roughly the last half hour of cook time, as it slows down the process. Each time you open it, the cook time will have to be increased by 15 minutes due to heat loss.

4

CONSIDER YOUR TIMING TO MAKE FOOD SAFE AND TASTY. Avoid food safety issues by minimizing the time food is defrosting or sitting on the "warm" setting. To keep pasta, small vegetables, or canned beans from getting mushy, add them to the cooker towards the end of the cook time. Similarly, add milk close to the end of the cook time to avoid curdling.

5

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SIZE. Most crock pots recommend that you don't fill more than 2/3 full to ensure food is cooked properly. A standard 2.5 quart is fine for 2 people; a 3.5-5 quart is best for a family of four, and larger families need at least a 6 quart crock pot.

6

USE THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE. Cooking on low (about 170°) will generally take nearly two times as long as cooking on high (about 280°). Tender, higher fat meats do best when cooking more quickly on high. For tougher cuts, cook longer on low.

